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ISSUES IN AMERICAN EDUCATION.

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THIS ARTICLE DISCUSSES THREE PROMINENT ISSUES OF CONTEMPORARY AMERICAN EDUCATION--UNEQUAL LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES, ACADEMIC FREEDOM, AND THE TEACHER AS A PROFESSIONAL WORKER. THE FIRST OF THESE ISSUES IS EXAMINED UNDER THE RUBRICS OF (1) THE GOALS OF INTEGRATION, (2) THE SEPARATION OF EDUCATION FROM INTEGRATION, (3) COMPENSATORY EDUCATION, (4) QUALITY EDUCATION AND "WHITENESS," (5) STATISTICAL INTEGRATION AND CULTURAL ISOLATION, (6) PATERNALISTIC AND PATRONIZING ATTITUDES, AND (7) POLITICS AND SCHOOL REFORM. IN A FINAL SECTION DEALING SPECIFICALLY WITH ACADEMIC FREEDOM AND THE TEACHING PROFESSIONAL, AN ATTEMPT IS MADE TO RELATE THESE ISSUES. THIS DOCUMENT IS CHAPTER 6 OF AHMANN, MATHEW, AND ROACH, MARGARET, EDS., "THE CHURCH AND THE URBAN RACIAL CRISIS," PUBLISHED FOR $2.95 BY DIVINE WORD PUBLICATIONS, TECHNY, ILLINOIS. (MM)

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Issues in American Education

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WHEN men fail on a grand scale, as Americans have in the field of popular education, they create, as it were, an ecumenism of error: Everybody knows everyone else's troubles. They know them because they have them. Credentials of faith neither spare a school the impact of these problems nor do they guarantee a solution to them. A *Catholic* response to our nation's educational problems is yet to be worked out. Perhaps there can be no such thing.

Ralph Ellison recently declared: "We very often get the impression that what is wrong with the American city is the Negro, when the reverse is true. What is wrong with the Negro is what we Americans have done to the American

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city."[1] Might we not say the same of our theme—"The Church and the Urban Racial Crisis"? It is not the racial crisis so much as the Church's relationship to the crisis that is the proper starting point. What will men make—or remake—of their Church? And dare such men continue to dwell in a *racial* crisis?

Three outstanding issues of contemporary American education are unequal learning opportunities, academic freedom, and the teacher as a professional worker. It is not evident that in a Catholic context the essential nature of these issues is changed. Racial segregation, suppression of free thought, and demeaning of dignified labor may be no less institutionalized in Catholic than in non-Catholic schools. Let us examine each of these issues in terms of their essentials, and conclude with an attempt at interrelating all three.

PROBLEMS OF SCHOOL SEGREGATION

The goal of the integration movement

Many of the problems arising out of school segregation are obscured by certain conceptual difficulties. The integration movement does not aim at creating a human checkerboard in schools across the country. The first significance of "moving bodies" is to break the crust of custom. The second is to lay the basis for new, more creative customs.

American society will be integrated whenever our people have a genuine and protected opportunity to live and learn with whomever they—and the others—wish. Whether that "end" pattern will resemble a checkerboard or a Jackson Pollock canvas is an intriguing but not essential question. The pattern can hardly resemble the gerrymandered and otherwise-managed separation that the architecture of racism has dictated.

Similarly, American schools will be integrated whenever

[1] Ralph Ellison, testimony, August 30, 1966, U.S. Congress, 89th, 2nd sess on, Senate, Committee on Government Operations, Subcommittee on Executive Reorganization, *Federal Role in Urban Affairs, Hearings*, Part 5 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1966), p. 1159.

educational opportunity is made available to all without being filtered through those favorite American nets of privilege—color and class. Veblen defined a vested interest as "a marketable right to something for nothing." Our segregated schools are the training grounds of the vested interests. A white skin and a middle-class position are becoming increasingly marketable in the competition for jobs and further education. An integrated school system would need to work in many ways against this growing marketability of educational privilege.

The separation of education from integration

Nobody contends seriously any longer that you can have separate-but-equal schools. The historic record is all-too convincing that segregation and low quality schooling develop together and are interconnected. On the other hand, many speak today of "quality" education without any reference to integration. Is this simply another version of separate-but-equal? Only in part.

Those who elevate "quality" education may well be recalling the earliest emphasis of the civil rights movement upon desegregation as such. That emphasis was well-conceived in its effort to stimulate the widest application of the *Brown* decision. It was ill-founded only in its incompleteness. School systems that were triumphs of desegregation often seemed not to accomplish much more than that.

Between 1954 and 1960, for example, numerous articles and even books were written about desegregation progress in St. Louis, Louisville, Baltimore, and Washington, D.C. Statistical evidence seemed to establish that desegregation was compatible with greater academic achievement of the desegregated students. It probably was. Still, the school system in each of these cities entered into extremely difficult conditions once the initial desegregation program was in operation. Today, according to recent investigations of the National Education Association, Louisville and Baltimore are seriously deficient in creating a school system that

can educate. A high administrative official of the St. Louis school system said, in February 1965, "Every year I have seen St. Louis schools get in worse shape. If the quality in education we are giving keeps on declining at the rate of the last ten years, the fate of our city is sealed."[2]

A congressional task force has found ample evidence of fundamental weaknesses in the District of Columbia school system.

There is very likely no evidence to support the argument that desegregation *caused* the quality of schools to decline. The evidence is to the contrary. Along with little more than token desegregation, some of these cities suffered an actual decline in educational quality. From 1955 to 1966 the proportion of provisional to permanent teachers rose in Washington from one-sixth to two-fifths, and in Baltimore from one-eighth to one-third.[3] While in 1955 Louisville pioneered in border state desegregation, the next year the city's school system eliminated kindergartens as an economy measure.[4] The spectacle of any rising achievement levels in the midst of deterioration in quality of faculties and facilities is surely a testimonial to the beneficial effect of desegregation. But such an accomplishment cannot counterbalance the overall deterioration of a school system.

There is little point in desegregating two separate-but-bankrupt school systems. It does make sense, however, to unify two ailing systems by sharing resources and challenges.

The cry for "quality" education is thus well-taken. It attempts to remedy a certain one-sidedness that characterized

[2] Robert Baker, Asst. Supt. of High Schools, St. Louis, quoted in *Integrated Education*, June-July, 1965, p. 8.

[3] See U.S. Congress, 89th. 2nd sess., House of Representatives, Committee on Education and Labor, Task Force on Antipoverty in the District of Columbia, *A Task Force Study of the Public School System in the District of Columbia As It Relates to the War on Poverty* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, June, 1966), p. 12; and Commission on Professional Rights and Responsibilities, *Baltimore, Maryland, Change and Contrast—The Children and the Public Schools* (Washington, D.C.: National Education Association, May, 1967), p. 34.

[4] Commission on Professional Rights and Responsibilities, *Louisville, Kentucky, A City in Transition and a School System in Jeopardy* (Washington,D.C.: National Education Association, May, 1965), p. 14.

civil rights thinking as recently as five years ago. But the slogan is itself shortsighted. It abstracts educational quality from its actual social framework of class and color. The question is *not:* Can ghettoized children conceivably learn if they attend homogeneous schools? Rather, it is: Can ghetto communities wring equal educational opportunities out of their school systems?

Compensatory education

The first question raises the problem of compensatory education. Two recent contributions are relevant. One is a racial-isolation study.[5] It reports that no compensatory education project *which has been evaluated* has succeeded in achieving its own stated aims. Not claiming any final explanation of this finding, the study implies that two conditions may have played a part in the failure: the racial isolation attending each of the projects, and the token expenditures involved. The outcome of the projects might have been improved in an integrated setting. It may also have been more favorable had immensely more money per student been made available, and used even in a racially isolated context. The study leaves this latter question open. For until these large amounts of money are made available, we cannot know the effects of their expenditure.

A second important treatment of compensatory education is the recent work by Gordon and Wilkerson.[6] In a penetrating evaluative chapter, the authors describe the pittance of money and resourcefulness that is invested in most existing compensatory education projects. They point to the virtual absence of independent evaluation of these projects. They take note of the frequent failure by the designers of the projects to specify educational outcomes of a cognitive nature, the area most in need of "compensation." It is these projects, by and large ill-financed, poorly-designed, uneval-

[5] U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, *Racial Isolation in the Public Schools* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1967).

[6] Edmund W. Gordon and Doxey A. Wilkerson, *Compensatory Education for the Disadvantaged: Programs and Practices—Preschool through College* (New York: College Entrance Board, 1966).

uated, and frequently tangential, that are put forward as a remedy for segregated, inferior education.

Compensatory education, then, as presently conceived and practiced, is an insufficient response to the cry for quality education. Also lacking is a reasonably comprehensive and informed estimate of the scale of expenditure required to test the maximum contribution of compensatory education. It might be of heuristic value, in this respect, to use in the estimating what might be called the Berlitz-model, that is, a one-to-one relationship of a highly skilled tutor and a student.

Quality and whiteness

Recently, Roy Wilkins, the NAACP's executive secretary, testified before a Senate hearing: "What the white community seems unable to understand [he said], is that the objective of integration is to get where the good education is, not just to get with the white children. . . . When I say I want quality education, I mean quality education. But when I say I want quality education even in Washington, D.C., or in the heart of Harlem . . . someone says, 'aha, he doesn't mind segregated schools.' That is not what I mean at all. We had segregated schools all along."[7]

Mr. Wilkins here implies several basic propositions. First, desegregation is necessary but subsidiary to quality instruction. Second, low-quality instruction is unacceptable whether or not it occurs within a desegregated context. Third, quality instruction must be insisted upon even if the school is presently segregated. The overall content of these propositions seems clear: Desegregation is important to the extent that it facilitates quality instruction.

What, then, of the controversy over whether "a Negro child can learn only when seated next to a white child"? This is a contrived question. White children in an all-white

[7] Roy Wilkins, testimony, November 30, 1966, U.S. Congress, 89th, 2nd sess., Senate, Committee on Government Operations, Subcommittee on Executive Reorganization, *Federal Role in Urban Affairs*, Part VII (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1967), pp. 1507-8.

school are—speaking very loosely—beneficiaries of a privileged order. They can, and many do, learn in the absence of Negro children. Negro children in presently-constituted all-Negro schools suffer, *virtually without exception*, from a significant deprivation of facilities and faculties. The facilities are simply inferior; the faculties are unconscionably overloaded with teaching responsibilities far beyond the capacity of the most devoted and competent. To believe that Negro *or white* children can learn in such circumstances is to substitute magical thinking for plain evidence. The presence or absence of white children can be of modest significance in such a situation. Just how significant is an empirical question, not to be established by rhetoric.

Integration without whites?

Both the Allen Report (New York) and the Hauser Report (Chicago) declared that integration could not occur in the absence of whites. In both cases, the immediate context of the remark was a warning that precipitate steps towards desegregation would frighten white parents from the city and thus be self-defeating. The practical consequence of the warning was to slow down whatever steps were contemplated. It can be argued that once this viewpoint is adopted, all steps toward desegregation become potentially upsetting to whites. Thus, desegregation policies that are based on placating whites tend to be self-constricting and self-defeating. They try to achieve less and less, and whites leave anyway. The circle narrows, and the narrowing becomes its own justification.

This whole line of reasoning rests, of course, on a single supposition: The pace of integration must be regulated by the willingness of the white community to accept it. If little integration is achieved, this failure is attributed to the political facts of life. Meanwhile, with increasing segregation the quality of our urban school systems continues to decline. The central cities grow blacker; the "white nooses" around them enlarge; and paralysis of policy sets in.

Population statistics showing a rising Negro percentage are viewed with great alarm. The shrinking white component of the central cities is viewed almost as sentimentally as the whooping crane. The problem is defined as how to retain the whites in the city and in the exceedingly few integrated schools. A second stage is projected during which whites may be attracted back to the central city.

But the fundamental educational problem of the central city is not the shrinking supply of middle-class white children. Rather, the problem is how to create an adequate education for the school system's children—whites included. In Chicago and Philadelphia, the majority of children in the system is black; in Detroit, almost so; in New York, black and Puerto Rican; in Los Angeles, black, Latin-American, and poor-white. The goal must be based on the majority of the children involved. As pointed out above, desegregation is important to the extent that it facilitates quality instruction. Wherever it operates this way, its contribution should be sought.

The movement from city to suburb is, in the main, a social and economic-class phenomenon. Suburbanization is not a panic-response to black inundation of neighborhoods. Least of all is it an effort to escape integrated schools; there are so few to escape *from*. Attempts to reverse the white outflow from the central city cannot succeed if they aim merely at granting privileges to schools still enrolling some white students. The outflow will continue to depend upon factors beyond the reach of the schools. Little that the schools can do will reverse or even quicken the flow. Factors such as housing supply, level of interest-rates, and employment conditions will largely determine the outcome, as they have in the past. Sociological concern for the shrinking white school population is, then, a diversion from the real problem of building quality school systems for the children who remain in the cities. Defensible as it is to maintain whatever pockets of school integration that exist, this concern must remain secondary.

But how can integration be achieved without attention being paid to whites? Can you have integration without whites? In an ideal sense, yes. Let us review a few essentials. If the stigma of color were removed from American life, and if a free selection from among genuine alternatives were possible, it is conceivable that many persons would choose to be educated with others of the same racial affiliation. In that event, racial imbalance would become unobjectionable. Indeed, the very concept would disappear. If the numerical proportions between the races were no longer indicators of educational privilege and deprivation, there would be no need for terms describing balanced or imbalanced proportions.

With the achievement of equality of educational opportunity, a perfected form of integration would have been attained also. Fundamentally, the two are identical. In each, the individual is treated as a unique human being whose creative capacities have the same dignity or worth as those of any other person. In that ideal state, neither class nor color could handicap any man.

But in the real and present world of children, the "state" is entirely different. As the National Education Association reported on Baltimore this year: "If the present trend of racial change in the school population continues, if white children continue to leave the public schools and Negro children continue to migrate to Baltimore, in less than 15 years (i.e., before 1982) all the children in the public schools could be the children that the schools are presently not equipped to serve." So that there would be little doubt of the specific meaning of the prediction, the report adds that even now "a growing majority of Baltimore's school children are not receiving an adequate education." When "growing majorities" of children fail to receive an adequate education, we have arrived at a new stage of things. We are no longer dealing with disadvantaged individuals or deprived minorities.

Measures are needed to bring about a rapid improvement

for large numbers of city children; to help as many children as possible, as soon as possible. At the same time, whatever degree of integration can be built into the improved systems must be accomplished. The one thing to be avoided is a bargain at the expense of either aim.

There are differing opinions as to the relative repugnance of school authorities to demands for improved instruction and for heightened integration. Civil-rights and parent groups are discovering that both demands are equally resisted. Attempts to desegregate a school system run up against real estate forces, among others, whose business interest is based largely on stabilizing existing patterns of residential occupancy; they see school-boundaries policy as a vital adjunct to their business. Attempts to bring about significant improvements in classroom instruction, on the other hand, require a reallocation of funds from the more privileged sectors and, more important, a sharp increase in total expenditures.

If major attention is paid to wholesale improvements in the classroom, and integration is incorporated wherever feasible, this is the most that can be done. The great promise of devices such as educational parks lies in the possibility of combining these two tasks.

Statistical integration and isolation

In every urban school system, public or parochial, are to be found a certain number of statistically integrated schools. The student bodies of these schools, that is, fall between 11 percent and 89 percent Negro or white (Chicago), or in certain proportions of Negro and Puerto Rican to mainland white (New York), or deviate within certain limits from the average ethnic composition of the district as a whole (California). Integrationists, presumably, wish to increase the number of such schools, and describe them as desirable if only because of their racial composition. In fact, it is not clear that any better education is going on in these schools than in statistically segregated schools.

How does the statistically integrated school differ from others with respect to the relations of young persons with one another? Does the school take the ethnic character of the school into account while planning curriculum? Student activities? Do textbooks and other reading materials reflect the special opportunities in the school for a full-bodied view of American life and history? Does the school administration lead the faculty and staff in these directions? Are teacher organizations aware *and involved* in planning for greater educational opportunities at the school? Are there structures for remedial instruction within the regular operations of the school? Are counselling and guidance specialists present in significantly large numbers?

The statistically integrated schools could become demonstration schools for an entire system. Of great practical importance is the fact that one does not have to change the racial composition of such schools. They are already desegregated. We have only to add meaning to the statistical fact. Again, the aim should be to demonstrate that integration improves education for all. Part of the entire point is lost if we regard the principal task as one of retaining white students in these schools.

A good deal of information is becoming available about the racial composition of specific schools, parochial and public. With regard to the former, a national ethnic survey is being conducted by the Education Department of the United States Catholic Conference. In New York City, statistics were recently published for parochial schools in Queens, the Bronx, and Manhattan; a survey covering Brooklyn and Richmond is under way. The state education department of New York is completing a state-wide survey of public and parochial schools. In California, results of a study of parochial schools in one large city are available. (It should be recalled, too, that the decennial census collects data on the racial composition of each household and on attendance in public and parochial schools. Special studies could be made on the relation of these two sets of facts.)

The statistically integrated school has its counterpart, the statistically isolated school. This is the school that is all-white or all-Negro. It is the former that we have hardly studied at all. In part, this failure reflects a judgment that there is nothing remarkable about an all-white school, that it is the normal condition in our culture; therefore, why study it? In large part, however, the subject is unstudied because of the greater failure by social scientists to inquire into the racial order of our society.

The all-white school, like the nearly all-white society, generates its own protective film of myths. Most convenient of all the myths is the one that defines the racial problem as the exclusive property of schools enrolling Negroes. It is a Negro problem rather than a white one. But anyone who has ducked bottles and bricks being thrown by white mobs at Negroes and whites demonstrating peacefully in Chicago, Louisville, or Milwaukee must take exception to such a characterization.

The monumental deprivation found in Negro schools has generated two misconceptions about all-white schools: They educate children satisfactorily in the technical abilities to read and write, and they are neutral to the great social conflicts of our time, especially race conflict. Both generalizations are very doubtful. "We have failed to recognize," wrote Joseph P. Lyford recently, "that white rural and urban schools are producing many children who read badly, are intellectually unstimulated, and isolated, who are unprepared for modern life, and who often are subject to the most violent types of racial prejudice."[8]

But we need not search for all-white schools which fail to train in everything but racial hate. Hopefully, these are in the minority. The majority of functioning all-white schools, staffed by ordinarily sensitive and responsible professionals, have succeeded in abstracting their students and

[8] Joseph P. Lyford, testimony, September 1, 1966, U.S. Congress, 89th, 2nd sess., Senate, Committee on Government Operations, Subcommittee on Executive Reorganization, *Federal Role in Urban Affairs*, Part VI (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1966), p. 1342.

themselves from the great social movement of our time. And this, on the single ground that no Negroes happen to attend the school.

New York State Education Commissioner James E. Allan, Jr., in speaking to a meeting of school board members from all over his state, once explained their responsibility: Desegregation is the special business of only some school boards in the state; integration is the proper concern of all the boards. All-white schools in inaccessible areas can be asked: Does your curriculum reflect a realistic portrayal of our ethnic history? Does civil rights enter into the subject matter taught in the school? Is the faculty segregated? *These are not "Negro" questions.* These, and many more, need to be asked of every American school.

Every school, whatever the racial composition of its student body, can take many steps to integrate its program. An all-white school can, among other things:

1. Integrate its faculty and staff while seeking to integrate students.
2. Be named after a prominent Negro American.
3. Use textbooks and other instructional materials that present the Negro American and other minorities truthfully.
4. Help students understand the contemporary struggle for human rights.
5. Develop an extra-curriculum program that will create opportunities for contacts with Negro-American and other minority students.
6. Make its "whiteness," as well as that of its surrounding community, a central educational concern.
7. Make its educational program more humane and its technical accomplishment more proficient.

Paternalistic and patronizing

Well-meaning educators must be on guard lest some of their intended beneficiaries say, with Thoreau: "If I knew for a certainty that a man was coming to my house with the

conscious design of doing me good, I should run for my life. . . ."[9] The urge to do good rather than to educate can be the death of effective teaching or administering. For one thing, it is much easier to do a little good than to do a little teaching. The segregated child has been the frequent object of charities, some not at all charitable. He has seldom experienced the joy of learning in school.[10] For another, the segregated child is a frequent victim of tokenism. In its most cynical form, tokenism is the offering of shadow for substance. But even in its most naive form—"at least it's a first step"—the end result is no different. A first step that is not succeeded by many additional steps loses its characteristic as a first step. You cannot travel anywhere by taking only a single step.

Paternalistic and patronizing attitudes, when these appear among teachers and other school personnel, are closely connected with the subject just discussed. By paternalism is meant the attitude that "Papa knows best"; beneficence is clearly intended but it is imposed from above. Neither student nor parent is truly consulted. In ghetto areas paternalism is imbedded in an ideology that imputes to the parents a basic non-concern and to the children a basic incapacity. When school personnel are challenged by events contrary to these preconceptions genuine shock results.

A patronizing attitude is one that combines beneficence with condescension. The condescender is one who graciously agrees to come down to the level of his inferiors. Two examples may suffice to illustrate this type. Most widespread is the tendency to water down a curriculum or subject on the ground that the students are unfitted, or do not deserve, to grapple with the genuine article. The systematic practice of graduating children who have not mastered even the basic essentials of a subject attests to illusory education. You cannot do this to children whom you respect. Another

[9] Henry David Thoreau, *Walden*, p. 60 (Rinehart ed.).

[10] See the excellent exploration of the problem of crusaders and professionals among school people in Wilson Record, "Changing Attitudes of School Personnel," *Integrated Education*, October-November, 1964.

example is the emphasis one finds currently in schools of education and elsewhere on the need to know the students subculture in order to give them effective instruction. Gordon and Wilkerson point out that virtually no evidence is at hand to support the contention. They stress, instead, the critical need of teachers to have confidence in the teachability of students, whatever their subculture.

Politics and school reform

Immediately following the electoral success of independent Negro aldermanic candidates in Chicago during April, 1967, a formal association was organized to prepare for further victories by putting forward a strong platform. Appealing first to the Negro community of Chicago, the group criticized the city's segregated schools and called for creative use of educational parks as a principal remedy.

In New York City, powerful, although still informal, political currents are moving in the direction of school reform. Primary emphasis is placed upon the participation of parent-groups in policy-making. Based on local support in the ghettos, the movement is led by many activists formerly at the head of the city's integration movement. Some of these have concluded that the potential for integration is so unsubstantial among whites as to leave no real basis for hope. Others, while stressing the need for immediate improvements in the ghetto classrooms, still regard integration as an attainable goal. Very recent events lend support to the latter group's analysis.

Events like these suggest that school reform is about to take on an unprecedented political tone. This must not be confused, as it is so frequently, with so-called "ethnic politics." According to this interpretation, each ethnic-immigrant group has gained a sense of solidarity and, subsequently, political power for its own members by centering its demands on issues that bring about benefits for the group. It is suggested that the Negro American is entering upon this phase of his development, and needs to turn inward the

better later to turn outward—once, that is, the integrity of his ethnic group is secured. Integration is thus viewed as a demand antithetical to the organizational necessities of the group.

Whatever the general validity or invalidity of this view, it has little or no application to the area of education. The Negro American occupies a unique position in the ethnic history of American education. Unlike immigrants from Europe, for example, the Negro had always to fight for his schools. European children swamped the American public school around 1900. But they never had to do battle to open the doors. More, during the years 1870-1920—the heyday of immigration to this country—immigrant children had the good fortune to attend school systems that were expanding and whose quality was rising. They arrived here at a time when public secondary schools were becoming part of the customary structure of educational opportunity. By 1900, America was spending more money per student than England, France, or Germany.[11] One may guess how much greater the gap was between the United States and the countries of southern and eastern Europe that were then providing the great bulk of the immigrants. These benefits were available for the asking. They were not withheld even from groups who were interested only in themselves and their own.

But the Negro American cannot afford the luxury of complete self-interest. If he would educate his children, he must make certain that school systems exist to do the job. He must help stop the decline and improve the existing systems for all children. The Negro American is forced by his own self-interest to seek the good of all. This is consistent with the historical experience of Americans. The concept of a truly *public* school system arose only during the 1830's and 1840's. Laboring men, reflecting on the large economic chance for their children, forced a fundamental reform of

[11] Albert Fishlow, "Levels of Nineteenth-Century American Investment in Education," *Journal of Economic History*, December, 1966, p. 434.

American education. We could be on the eve of another great extension of educational democracy. It will not come, however, as a benefit frankly planned for some but not for all.

The constraint of the historic moment underlies the choice of a political strategy for good schools. Integration and separation are not simply the reverse sides of a coin to be flipped and chosen. The urban schools will be integrated or they will disintegrate. If we content ourselves with trying to save the neighborhood school, even a black one, we will lose the system of popular education. In American history, the public schools were never dependent on any communal, or special ethnic, purpose. Catholic schools arose more out of rebuff from the majority than from an affirmative decision to separate. But this option the Negro American lacks today because he is poor and must depend upon public funds for his education. (One wonders, even, what the fate of the Catholic schools would have been had they started during the period of relative affluence among Catholics in the 1960's rather than a century earlier.)

ACADEMIC FREEDOM AND THE TEACHING PROFESSIONAL

In his essay *On Liberty,* John Stuart Mill listed three types of persons who were incapable of handling freedom responsibly and thus over whom a reasonable despotism was justified. These were: infants, the mentally ill, and barbarians. (Presumably, the last-named included religious and lay college and university professors.) The despotism was reasonable in that it was temporary, looking forward to the time when the despot's tutelage would produce civilized persons from barbarians.

The ideology of reasonable despotism continues to thrive. Its profound paternalism—for it is nothing else—is astonishingly effective. What are its sources of support? One primary source is the general social isolation of the American college and university.

Kenneth B. Clark recently wrote:

> Our colleges and universities have a long history of default on important moral issues. They have frequently tried to make a virtue of isolation from the problems of the marketplace and from the anguished yearnings of the deprived and powerless people of our society. They have thrown in their lot with the powerful in government, business, and industry. Their concern with purity of research is reconciled with relative ease as they accept larger and larger grants and subsidies from the Defense Department, from the C.I.A., and from big business for work on practical problems—problems of power. It is only when the issue is directly or indirectly one of social justice or fundamental social change that our colleges and universities raise questions concerning the propriety of institutional involvement or the role of a professor, and ask whether involvement is consistent with the pure and detached quest for truth.[12]

The day-to-day context of the American university is thus one of conformism to conventional power and of self-determined isolation from some sources of social change.

In the elementary and high schools, a similar combination of conformism and isolation can be seen at work. Here, however, the isolation is much more difficult to maintain as, increasingly, ghetto neighborhoods demand a changed response. And the conformism is falling away, if only in matters of salaries and working conditions. We are in the midst of a period of search for a new professionalism, one characterized both by a heightened sense of self-assertion and by an increased sense of social relevance.

Professionalism has ever been compatible with organizational weakness and social conformism. But under the pressing conditions of urban education, there is a chance for more constructive professionalism. Before analyzing these conditions, we ought to examine some concrete contemporary meanings of professionalism which are puzzling and perplexing.

Throughout the South, for example, numerous authenticated cases have been cited of white teachers and administrators either committing or condoning violence against Negro children in desegregated schools. No teachers' or administrators' group has apparently filed charges of unpro-

[12] Kenneth B. Clark, "Intelligence, the University, and the Society," *American Scholar*, Winter, 1966-1967, p. 29.

fessionalism against the offenders. And yet, the use of violence against a child is an abomination. The Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission, in its report covering the year 1966, cited three cases of teacher abuse of Negro children. None was referred to a professional organization.

In one city after another, teachers and administrators have failed to use their professional organizations to protest the depreciation of academic standards, the discriminatory allocation of school facilities, and the utter insufficiency of school budgeting requests. Although universities are well-supplied with members of Greek-letter learned societies, only rarely have these university specialists objected when the lower schools were doing an extremely poor job of elementary instruction in their specialty. They have not seen their professional task as extending that far.

Very few school people have welcomed community demands for more effective education. Instead, professionalism is thrown up as a barrier to communication. A New York teacher-leader has put the matter extremely well: Teachers have the right to be left alone to carry out their educational task, but parents have an equal right to demand solutions to the educational problems of the community. Professionalism cannot be a substitute for teaching and learning.

These examples suggest that professionalism is often seen in abstraction from concrete educational problems or problems of educational systems. To the extent that this is true, so-called codes of professional ethics verge on the immoral. An excellent pragmatic test of an existing code would be to apply it to the problems of segregation and integration discussed in the first part of this paper. What concrete action, for example, could one deduce from a code to meet the problem of a "growing majority" of school children who fail to receive an adequate education?

Professions, fortunately, are more than their codes—though they can also be less. At best, present tendencies can develop intellectually excellent and socially responsive

groups of men and women in our schools. At worst, we can end up with pedagogical guilds. The latter would still be a gain inasmuch as guilds exercise more quality control than is the case at present in the schools. That this may well happen is made more likely by the probable preference of administrations and boards of education to deal with a guild than with a profession.

A guild needs sustenance and little more. It raises no cry for academic freedom; the only liberty it craves is to set the price of its service and guard over entry into its ranks. A modern educational profession, on the other hand, can be a guardian over the young and can prize most an open, inquiring mind among its students and colleagues. That teacher organization will be most constructive which defines its responsibility most broadly.

Yet, it would be as unrealistic to expect a profession to form itself alone as to expect it to reform itself. Community movements, especially in the ghettos, are probably the single most important external force acting on teachers to form a more genuine profession. The United Federation of Teachers in New York City failed to understand this soon enough. In the events around P.S. 201, during early fall, 1966, U.F.T. awoke to find itself ranged against the P.S. 201 parents' group. Since then, the union has assigned staff to organize joint union-parent demonstrations around single schools; common educational grievances are publicized and the school board is increasingly confronted with a louder voice.

A fundamental condition of this cooperation is the union's willingness to broaden its program far beyond bread-and-butter issues. In this sense, the parents are forcing the union to act as a profession rather than a guild. Is it possible that parents will insist that their teachers not only be effective but also free?

New chances are erupting throughout the world of education. The tinderbox of equality is setting fire to many an ancient conception of the proper relation of man to man, of

professional to governing body, of theory to practice, of formal opportunity to actual fulfillment. Educators have everything to gain and everything to lose. If they gauge the contemporary situation wrongly, their first opportunity to become a genuine profession will pass them by. If they sympathetically understand the opportunities in the present travail, American education will have taken a great step on the long journey toward human dignity.